

MONTANA UPDATE

Montana Department of Commerce

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Strategic Partnerships Score Big for Montana

There's a lot of power in partnerships. That's why Travel Montana, with the help of winter advertising agency Mercury Advertising, has recently teamed up with two complementary private-sector companies to broaden Montana's winter marketing efforts.

As was highlighted in the September Update, a strategic partnership was struck with premier outdoor clothing and gear retailer, The North Face (TNF). Through posters and collateral in TNF's nine signature stores, direct email blasts to TNF and Travel Montana databases, and online promotion on both TNF and wintermt.com homepages, it is estimated that the Montana message and contest promotion reached at least 350,000 people.

And these are well-targeted, like-minded people. With a motto of "Never Stop Exploring," and customers with deep pocketbooks, active adventure lifestyles and a propensity to travel, TNF made a perfect partner. The promotion ran through the end of October.

The key market campaign in Minnesota also kicked off in October with the "Montana Road Show" event. Travel Montana worked with another outdoor-oriented partner, the REI (Recreational Equipment, Inc.) store in Bloomington, MN. As one of the largest REI stores in the

country, and located just minutes from downtown Minneapolis, the store is well-known to outdoor enthusiasts in Minnesota—including skiers!

The weekend event featured five major Montana ski areas, tourism regions and CVBs...and the chance to win a ski vacation to Montana. For optimum exposure, the Road Show was planned to coincide with one of REI's biggest traffic-generating weekends of the year: the "Scratch and Dent" Sale.

Thanks to the big sale, die-hard customers camped outside the store and another 250 secured their places in line Saturday morning before the doors even opened. Travel Montana and Mercury staff hit the pavement, serving up some Montana hospitality with hot chocolate and coffee, handing out Montana highway maps and talking up Montana and the ski package and vacation giveaways. More than 3,000 customers poured through the store over the weekend,

taking with them Montana winter guides, ski area info, Montana-branded sticks of lip balm and the desire and motivation to visit Montana this winter!

The Minnesota campaign will continue through April with bag stuffers at REI during Christmas, skyway panels, bus kings, billboards, street teams and newspaper and radio ads, all compelling Minnesotans to visit Montana.



"Find Yourself In Montana" at the 2006 Montana Governor's Conference

"Find Yourself In Montana" is the theme for the 2006 Montana Governor's Conference on Tourism & Recreation, April 10-11, at Great Falls' Best Western Heritage Inn. After 32 years of gathering, this is Great Falls' first time hosting the statewide conference. They are excited and so are we!

The Convention & Events subcommittee of the Great Falls Area Chamber is preparing special events and field trips for conference goers to "find" themselves in. Current ideas include:

Sunday afternoon/early evening, April 9:

Great Falls Historic Trolley Tours of the River City

Monday evening,

April 10:

"A Night With Charlie" Pitchfork Fondue & entertainment at the C.M. Russell Museum

Tuesday afternoon,

April 11:

Field trips offered as part of conference agenda—

Fort Benton Tour

Ulm Pishkun State Park Tour

River's Edge & Falls Tour

Great Falls Historic Trolley Tours

Great Falls Cultural & Heritage Facility Tour

Registration materials and conference information, as well as sponsor and exhibitor applications are posted on Travel Montana's intranet site: www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference

A detailed agenda and speaker information will be provided in future updates and posted on the website in the New Year.

NTA Night a Success

The National Tour Association (NTA) held its annual convention November 4-8 in Detroit, MI. Marlee Iverson and Pam Gosink attended the event and met with 61 group tour operators, on an appointment basis to promote Montana's sites, attractions and services. This year's Montana Night was held at The Historic Gem Theatre and Century Grille. Travel Montana and 16 Montana tourism service suppliers hosted over 35 tour operators at the educational as well as entertaining dinner event. Winner of this year's trip for two to Montana is Linda Blackston of Good News Travels based in Easley, SC. The contest is open to tour operators attending the NTA conference and is supported by Montana suppliers, travel regions and Travel Montana. Leads from NTA will be posted on the intranet site: www.travelmontana.mt.gov under Group Travel. The site is password protected so if you need a password or have forgotten yours, you can contact Marlee Iverson at 406-841-2895 or miverson@mt.gov.

Film Office News

The Montana Film Office (MFO) was once again a sponsor of AFI Fest 2005 held November 3-13 at the ArcLight Hollywood Theater on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles, CA. As it does with other film festivals, the MFO partnered with its Film The West marketing consortium of Idaho, South Dakota and Wyoming. By partnering on sponsorship fees, the Film The West marketing cooperative allows each of the state partners to have a presence at what would

otherwise be cost-prohibitive events to attend individually.

In addition to the value-added opportunities surrounding the event, such as numerous program listings and the ability to feature Big Sky imagery on the big screens prior to film screenings, Montana co-hosted a filmmaker reception. At the reception, the MFO provided VIP gift bags containing the Montana 20% off buttons and key chains as well as a 20% off branded 2006 Montana Calendar and most importantly, had the opportunity to address several hundred filmmakers in attendance about the benefits of filming in Montana.

Elk Country Visitor Center Opens Its Doors

Replete with its iconic 1,500 pound, 13-foot high bronze bull elk, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation opened its new Elk Country Visitor Center on November 1 in Missoula.



The 11,800 square foot facility is hoping that its location just north of Interstate 90 will attract more tourists through its doors. In addition to numerous interpretive displays designed to educate and inspire, the center features a log hunting cabin—complete with rifles, leather furniture, a fireplace and trophy mounts on the walls as well as a 30-seat

Wildlife Theatre. J. Dart, RMEF president and CEO, believes that the new facility will help them take their educational mission to a whole new level. For more information on the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation visit www.rmef.org.

Grant Funds Available

This is a reminder that Montana communities, organizations and tribal governments sponsoring or planning new annual events have until January 13, 2006 to apply for \$50,000 in state tourism "bed tax" grant funds available from the Montana Department of Commerce, Travel Montana Special Events Grant Program (SEGP).

For more information about the SEGP, or to request an application, contact Travel Montana, 406-841-2870. SEGP application materials can be downloaded from Travel Montana's intranet site: travelmontana.mt.gov.

Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided to disabled persons on request.

Happy Holidays & Happy New Year from the Montana Promotion Division

Calendar of Events

December

26 MPD Offices closed

January

3 MPD Offices closed

13 SEGP Applications deadline

For all of the latest Montana tourism industry information log on to:
travelmontana.mt.gov

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